

June 9, 2001

Dockets Management Branch
HFA-305 FDA, 5630 Fishers Lane
Room 1061
Rockville, MD 20852

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Re: Labeling for Food Allergens

Dear Sir/Ms:

It is with great concern with which I write to express my opinion on the current state of food labeling in the United States. Apparently the food manufacturers have finally agreed to put certain crucial information on their labels reflecting allergen content. It is my understanding that the manufacturers have come to this decision in order to avoid having the federal government require them to do so with perhaps greater clarity.

While this is a wonderful, potentially life saving improvement for Americans with certain food allergies; it does nothing to address the problems of those with celiac disease. I am a celiac. This means that I cannot eat ANYTHING that has gluten in it (wheat, oats, rye or barley) for the rest of my life. Although I won't necessarily have an immediate anaphylactic shock reaction to said substances; I must avoid them completely in order not to have a gradual **reaction** that makes me ill in numerous ways. The worst of which would be to die of lymphoma due to repeated exposure to gluten. It should come of no surprise to your committee that **this is** also a life and death issue, albeit with a different twist then someone who is allergic to nuts.

The current state of labeling in this country is appalling. I have been on a gluten free diet for nearly eight years since my biopsy diagnosis. I am unable to decipher most labels due to inadequate labeling information. For example, the following "food" ingredients are really just mystery substances requiring me to avoid the product completely: natural flavorings, artificial flavorings, hydrolyzed vegetable protein, modified food starch, autolyzed yeast extract. It goes on and on.

Certainly I can just avoid anything with mystery ingredients, but when the realization hits that all processed foods in this country contain some sort of

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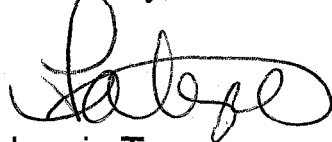
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"starch", this diet becomes rather grim. When I attempt to gather information from the manufacturer directly, I am generally met with misinformation from customer representatives who tend to have no clue what gluten is anyway. Sometimes companies refuse to provide information at all.

Why does it have to be this way in the first place? Isn't it bad enough that celiacs have to exist in a gluten based food culture unable to partake of it in any form; but that we can't even get true and accurate information on a label depicting whether or not there is gluten in a can of vegetables, etc. Take a look at a few labels in the grocery store the next time you are there and perhaps you **will** start to see what it is like to be a **celiac** on a day to day basis every time one wishes to eat.

Please require the food manufacturers to label for gluten content as well as the few allergens that they have agreed to label for. Thank you very much for your time and efforts toward making food in the United States safe for people like myself.

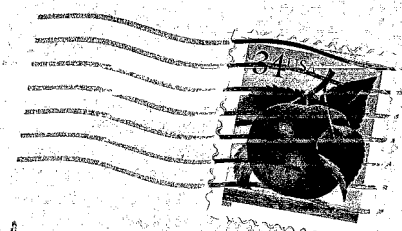
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Laurie Tepe".

Laurie Tepe
12435 E. Sutter Mill St.
Tucson, AZ 85749

Tepe
12435 E. Sutter Mill St
Tucson, AZ 85749

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PM
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